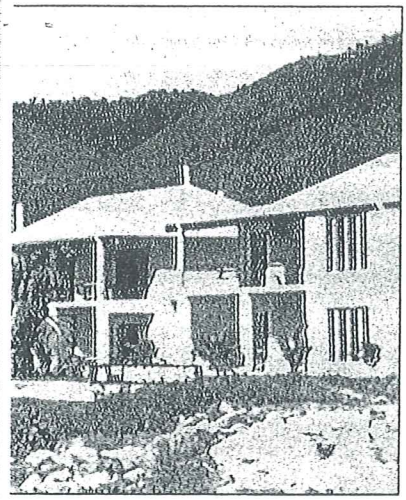

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was legally out of his investigators' reach, flew on to Tortola and bought a shell company with no office and no employees.

Senior FBI agent Ross Gaffney now believes that, between leaving California and ending up as the wherewithal with which to build condominiums and shopping centres in Florida, those particular assets were enshrouded in seven separate layers of secrecy — an impenetrable smokescreen which could have been diffused if America had had access, through Scotland Yard, to Tortola's darker banking corridors.

TO ADD to FBI frustration, even convicted American fraudsters have been readily granted licences to set up banks in Anguilla and throughout the dependencies, senior government officials have either turned a blind eye to international financial skulduggery or, at worst, participated in it. Two years ago Montserrat's attorney general was convicted on fraud charges following investigations into brass-plate banks, and the Serious Fraud Office are currently investigating the role of Cayman Islands officials in connection with the BCCI scandal.

"There's no doubt about the need for urgent action," says Detective Chief Superintendent Jones, whose branch of the Metropolitan Police Fraud Squad is involved, among other specialities, in international banking and computer fraud. "We are primarily here to police London but because fraudsters don't recognise national boundaries it is essential that we build up our relationship with other forces overseas. As a result of our Montserrat inquiries alone there are now 50 people who have either been convicted in US courts or are awaiting trial."

Jones is at pains to insist that he has nothing against people and companies having legitimate tax havens and is equally quick to acknowledge the existence of Caribbean banks of the utmost integrity. "But we are dealing with highly sophisticated criminals, against whom the local police forces do not have the resources to compete," he says. "Our aim is to assist the dependent territories in their fight against organised international crime. Apart from anything else, there are too many ordinary people who are being persuaded to invest in securities which, five or 10 years later, are found no longer to exist or perhaps never to have existed at all."

Carey's Street

RELATIONS between Lambeth Palace and the fourth estate have not been particularly easy in recent years. Now the Archbishop of Canterbury's younger son has quit the Church Army for journalism.

COMMENTARY

ALLAN MASSIE

What they did before sex

London Daily Telegraph 3/12/93

THE REVIEWS of the new biography of J. Edgar Hoover by Anthony Summers have been revealing, less for what they tell us about the dictatorial director of the FBI than for the light they shed on our own times.

Most reviewers have delightedly reported Summers's allegation that Hoover was secretly a transvestite, though some have admitted that the only evidence comes from a tainted source and is extremely suspect. Few, however, have questioned the assertion that Hoover's second in command, Clyde Tolson, was also his lover.

The evidence for this is largely circumstantial, though there are reports, of dubious reliability, that they were seen holding hands. But the solid evidence is simply that they were friends for more than 40 years; that Hoover collected Tolson on his way to the office every morning; that they lunched and dined almost daily and went on holiday together. To many people this will be conclusive; some of us may have our doubts.

Why? Well, there are three expressions, all current in my youth, which seem to have died: confirmed bachelor, misogynist and spinster. I have known representatives of each category, all of whom would have been shocked to have been accused of what they would have considered "unnatural vice".

Yet nowadays, any woman without a male partner is likely to be thought a lesbian; this would have astounded my maiden great-aunts. Likewise, confirmed bachelors are all thought to be as queer as coots.

IT USED to be different. Anyone over 40 who had a public school and university education will have known schoolmasters and dons who were crusty old bachelors. Some disliked women; some may have feared them; some found them simply irrelevant.

They lived, as did army officers, in a masculine world, and they didn't marry, either because they lacked opportunity or inclination, or because they couldn't afford to. A few, admittedly, were pederasts; some repressed any desires they may have felt, and would indeed have thought it wicked to give them physical expression. Some may even have gone on holiday with colleagues with whom they lunched and dined every day. But they would have been rather surprised if anyone told them that this proved they were having a sexual relationship with that colleague, whom they quite probably addressed by his surname for 40 years.

The truth is that until recently men and women lived largely separate existences. There was a male society of work and clubs and sport, and a female one of, let us say, tea parties. They came together at certain points, but not for everyone. Men were not supposed to marry till they were in a position to support a wife and family, and sometimes, by the time they had reached that position, they had got out of the way of thinking about marriage and were comfortably ensconced in their exclusively masculine world.

ALL this may be hard for the young to understand, but it is the way many people lived then, and middle-aged critics should remember it. I am not saying this is how it was with Hoover and Tolson, but I am saying it is quite possible and even likely that it was.

They may, of course, have been a couple, like Somerset Maugham and Gerald Haxton, but they may equally have been a different sort of couple, like Holmes and Watson, who shared rooms, adventures and holidays. Jokers, of course, have suggested that, too, was a homosexual relationship, but it is not a thought which occurred to Conan Doyle.

Today we have put sexual identity and sexual satisfaction at the centre of things. Biographers seem to think their first duty is to tell us about their subject's sex life. Nobody would deny this is important, but it is not the only thing that is important, and may not be the chief one. In the 19th century, people worried about God and their relationship to Him; now they are supposed to worry about sex instead.

That is the big difference, and it is a distorting one. It only requires a little observation to show that, important as sex may be, it plays a smaller part in many people's lives than this view of things would suggest.

Sexual feelings are often sublimated or repressed; they may even simply be weak. Power, work, money may all occupy people's thoughts more urgently than sex does. Nineteenth-century biographers underplayed the importance of sex; 20th-century ones go to the other extreme. So, while it is possible Hoover and Tolson were lovers, I still think it more probable that the scheming and vindictive old bully was really married to the FBI.